



CITY OF SOUTH PORTLAND

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PRESS RELEASE

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South Portland City Manager Issues Four Emergency Regulations, Including Stay At Home Requirement

South Portland City Manager Scott Morelli announced today four emergency regulations aimed at protecting the health and safety of South Portland residents. These regulations, made possible by the issuance on Tuesday of a proclamation by Mayor Katherine Lewis that a state of emergency exists in South Portland, include: 1) A requirement to stay at home or place of residence, 2) Prohibiting the use of playground and outdoor fitness equipment at City parks, beaches, and outdoor recreation facilities, 3) Restrictions on visitors to senior care facilities, and 4) Prohibiting the use of reusable bags at all retail establishments. These regulations will become effective at noon on Friday, March 27.

Stay at Home or Place of Residence

The stay at home regulation requires those living within the City of South Portland to stay at home or in their place of residence unless they are performing an essential activity. The regulation defines five types of essential activities, including:

1. For health and safety – such as, but not limited to, seeking emergency services, obtaining medical supplies or medication, or visiting a health care professional;
2. For necessary supplies and services – such, but not limited to, groceries and food; household consumer products; supplies needed to work from home; automobile repairs and supplies; and other items necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences;
3. For certain types of work – to go to and from a person’s workplace to perform a job function necessary to provide goods and services being sought as outlined above, or as otherwise deemed an essential business and operation pursuant to the Governor’s Executive Order 19;
4. To take care of others – to care for a family member, friend, or pet in another household and to transport those people/pets as allowed by the regulations; and
5. For outdoor activity – to engage in outdoor activity, so long as social distancing is observed.

Individuals experiencing homelessness are exempt from this regulation, as are those whose residences are or become unsafe, such as those experiencing domestic violence.

The stay at home requirement is NOT a shelter in place order. A shelter in place order means that individuals must stay in their location and cannot leave for any reason until an “all clear” signal is issued. The stay at home requirement allows individuals to leave their homes but only for certain reasons.

Use of City Parks

City parks, beaches, and outdoor recreation facilities owned and operated by the City for outdoor activity remain open for the time being. However, use of outdoor fitness equipment (e.g., pull-up bars) and playground equipment (e.g., play systems, climbing equipment, swing sets, and slides) are prohibited. This includes playground equipment at any City operated school. Such equipment is antithetical to social distancing and studies indicate that the coronavirus can live on these surfaces for up to three days, thus easily spreading the COVID-19 disease to children.

While City parks, beaches, and recreational facilities will remain open for now, users are required to practice social distancing techniques as ordered by the Governor, including maintaining at least six feet of distance from other persons with whom they do not share a household, and not exceeding the ten person gathering limit. City Manager Morelli said that City staff will continue to monitor these locations and may take future action, such as completely closing them, if social distancing is not being carefully followed.

Restrictions on Visitors to Senior Care Facilities

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the COVID-19 disease is particularly dangerous for at-risk populations, including those over the age of 60. Hence, this regulation restricts visitors to all residential care, assisted living, long-term care, age 55 and over senior living, and similar type residential facilities serving seniors to only those providing COVID-19 essential business and operations-related activities. Local Health Officer Josh Pobrislo notes that he has been in touch with many of these facilities and that they are already putting in place these types of restrictions. Mr. Morelli said he applauds the efforts of those who have been proactive in addressing this and added “at best, this will ensure all facilities are in compliance, and at worst this will be duplicative of what is already occurring.” He further noted that visitors would be allowed when a resident is near death and/or in hospice care.

Prohibition on the Use of Reusable Bags at Retail Establishments

The final regulation at this time prohibits the use of reusable bags at checkout at all retail stores, such as grocery stores and convenience stores. Recent studies suggest that not only can these bags contain harmful bacteria if not properly washed and stored, but also that the coronavirus can live on the bags’ surfaces for up to three days. Patrons should not bring these types of bags into stores and stores are directed to not accept such bags even if they are brought in. Stores should also not charge the five cent single-use bag fee that had been required by South Portland’s ordinance. Due to the Maine Legislature’s expedited effective date of the State’s ban on single-use bags statewide, the City’s ordinance levying this fee is no longer valid.

“All of these actions, combined with prior City decisions to cancel in-person meetings, close City facilities to the public, and order non-essential municipal employees to work from home, will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in South Portland and save lives,” said Mr. Morelli. “We ask for the public’s cooperation during this period so they we can help ensure our health and safety and not overwhelm our first responders and health professionals. Undertaking these actions now will ‘flatten the curve’ and help our City and State get through this crisis safer and quicker.”

For More Information

Attached is a Frequently Asked Questions sheet to help residents further understand what these regulations mean. The full emergency regulation document is also attached.

Residents are encouraged to obtain the latest information from the [Maine CDC](#) and [U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#). We also recommend taking precautionary measures like a person would for cold and the flu. Examples include staying home when you are sick, covering your cough and sneeze (into your arm), and

practicing good hand washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds. Residents and visitors to South Portland can stay informed of our efforts via the following methods:

- Visit the [COVID-19 page](#) on our website;
- Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#);
- [Sign up](#) for phone, text, and/or email alerts via the City's CodeRED service (aka Reverse 9-1-1). You can also download the CodeRED mobile app for your phone; and
- Stay tuned to local TV and print media for local, state, and national news regarding COVID-19.

The City of South Portland will continue to work closely with other agencies to provide additional updates and information as it is available and applicable.

For more information, please contact EMA Director/Fire Chief James Wilson at 207-799-3314 or jwilson@southportland.org or City Manager Scott Morelli at 207-767-7606 or smorelli@southportland.org.